

Subject: **Gold King Mine Release - Regional Update #13**

Date: **24 August 2015**

### **Background**

The Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado has had a continuous discharge of acidic mine drainage that is a historic contributor of lead, arsenic, zinc, copper, and cadmium into the Cement Creek drainage of the Animas River watershed. On August 5, 2015, an estimated 3 million gallons of mine wastewater released into the upper portions of Cement Creek, and into the Animas River.

### **Executive Summary**

- **Field operations associated with Navajo Nation have resumed to include water and sediment sampling. Feed delivery has continued through the operational periods. EPA R9 has completed water deliveries as of August 21, providing a total of 418,000 gallons of water for livestock and agriculture.**
- Farmington ICP has committed to providing technical assistance to Navajo Nation for irrigation ditch flushing.
- Based on EPA surface water data collected following the August 5, 2015 Gold King Mine release, San Juan River water quality in Navajo Nation has returned to pre-event conditions. EPA issued a press release on August 19, 2015 stating that water quality in the San Juan River has now returned to levels measured before the release entered the Navajo Nation.  
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/6CA2EE5CC335927585257EA7001294F4>
- Water Advisories Lifted: New Mexico announced that drinking water systems and recreational activity along the Animas and San Juan rivers can resume. The City of Durango announced that they had resumed pumping raw water for water drinking water treatment and distribution; and La Plata County announced that the Animas River was open to recreational use. The State of Utah also lifted their advisories for Utah Crop Irrigation and Livestock.
- EPA Region 9 continues to coordinate with representatives from the Navajo Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the States of AZ, Utah, NM, and federal agencies Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, and US Geological Survey.

### **Current Actions**

- **Sampling has resumed on Navajo Nation for water and sediment at all 11 locations previously sampled.**
- **EPA has posted a section on “Questions about Sunnyside Mine” to the Frequent Questions part of the national website.**
- **Alfalfa will continue to be delivered to Navajo Chapters as scheduled through Windowrock. EPA R9 has provided a total of 2,304 bales to date.**
- **EPA R9 has completed water deliveries as of August 21, providing a total of 418,000 gallons of water for livestock and agriculture.**
- Based on EPA surface water data collected following the August 5, 2015 Gold King Mine release, San Juan River water quality in Navajo Nation has returned to pre-event conditions. This determination is based on a review of water quality data collected from August 7-15, 2015 at EPA’s sampling point near Hogback, New Mexico. Water quality has now returned to levels measured before the release entered the Navajo Nation. Water and sediments

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from the mine were last observed at Nenahnezad, New Mexico, east of Hogback, New Mexico, on August 8, 2015.

- Farmington ICP has committed to providing technical assistance to Navajo Nation for irrigation ditch flushing.
- EPA released additional water quality data on the San Juan River between Farmington and Shiprock, New Mexico. Data can be found here: <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/gold-king-mine-data-august-18-2015>

Each surface water sample was analyzed for metals including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury. Due to the highly variable conditions typical of this segment of the river, additional testing will be conducted, and we continue to work closely with the Navajo Nation EPA on assessing drinking water, agriculture, livestock, and other critical water needs.

#### Community Outreach

- The Public Hotline number (1-844-607-9700) **has been transferred** to EPA HQ.
- **Liaison officers are continuing outreach with Navajo community members and representatives of the Navajo Tribe.**
- **Congressman Burgess (TX) and Congressman Tipton (CO) and staff are visiting the Gold King Mine site and will receive a response briefing on August 25, 2015.**
- Meetings at the Olijato, Aneth and Navajo Mountain Chapters have been cancelled.
- August 20, there was a public meeting/Open House in Durango hosted by San Juan County, CO. EPA presented an overview of the response and assist with directing people to focused, topic-specific tables.
- Region 6, 8, 9 continue to hold joint Regional Response Team calls with State and Federal Agencies for situational updates.

#### Personnel On-Site

3 R9 OSCs

1 R9 PIO

**2 R9 CIC**

**1 R9 LNO**

**9 USCG PST**

**17 START Contractors**

#### Key Issues

- None at this time

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